



Thornwell
BUILDING TOMORROW'S FAMILIES

Emphasis Month

Minutes for Mission

GENERATIONS OF GIVING

Sharing a Minute for Mission during a worship service is a meaningful way to highlight the importance of Emphasis Month and show how your church's generosity is changing lives. Here are a few great options for who might lead this moment:

- A church member who lived or worked at Thornwell
- A church member who has a family connection to Thornwell
- A Mission Committee member
- A Pastor
- A Thornwell board member or employee

If you would like to inquire about a Thornwell representative sharing a Minute for Mission at your church, please contact Ella Casto-Waters at **864-451-8811** or **ECastoWaters@thornwell.org**

150 Years of Thornwell Minutes for Mission



**Matthew 23 is part of the Sunday lectionary readings on November 1*

In Matthew 23, Jesus speaks strongly to the religious leaders of his day. He warns against a faith that seems impressive but fails to live by God's commandments.

He says of the scribes and the Pharisees, "They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others, but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them."

Then Jesus reminds us that God's ways are countercultural: "All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted."

As we begin *Thornwell Emphasis Month*, we are asking a simple but important question:

What does it look like to live out true faith and to pass that on to the next generation?

True faith is not about looking compassionate. It is about practicing compassion.

It is not about *judging others*. It is about helping to carry them.

It is not about elevating ourselves. **It is about giving generously.**

For more than 150 years, Thornwell's story has been written by people — and communities of faith — who lived counterculturally, who embodied humility, compassion, and generosity. For generations, Thornwell's partners and friends have decided they would help meet the needs of children and families instead of turning away.

The needs of children and families have evolved over the years. Thornwell's programs have evolved, too. But the heart of the mission remains the same: **to answer God's call to care for all God's children — to help carry burdens that are too heavy to bear alone.**

That is the legacy we celebrate during Thornwell Emphasis Month, and a legacy everyone is invited to be part of! For generations, churches have gathered around this mission — praying, giving, serving, advocating, and sharing Thornwell's story with others.

Because of that legacy, passed on through generations, children discovered safety and belonging. Families found healing and support. Communities experienced renewal. And it doesn't stop there. Love multiplies. Hope is contagious — "it is a torch passed from hand to hand so the dark cannot win."



That is generations of giving.

It is one generation showing the next what it looks like to love our neighbors.

It is faith modeled through obedience to God's commands.

It is learning generosity by watching someone else give faithfully.

This month, we will share stories of this legacy — stories of generosity, service, compassion, and transformation. Stories of people who have invested in Thornwell and stories of children and families whose lives have been transformed because someone chose to care.

Because Thornwell's story has never been written by one person.

It has always been written together.

And there is more work to do. The needs around us are real. The burdens are real. But so are our opportunities **AND** our ability to respond with compassion. Jesus calls us not simply to talk about compassion, but to practice it. Not simply to notice burdens, but to help carry them. Not simply to call ourselves Christians, but to live lives that reflect the love of Christ.

May we be people who love.

May we be people who give.

May we be people who carry one another's burdens.

And may the faithfulness we practice today become a legacy for generations to come.

This Thornwell Emphasis Month, we invite you to be part of Generations of Giving by prayerfully considering how God is calling you to help meet the needs of children and families. Through prayer, giving, or serving, your partnership with Thornwell this month—and all year long—helps carry burdens that are too heavy to bear alone for children, families, and communities.

CONTINUE TO WEEK 2 >>

**Psalm 78 is part of the Sunday lectionary readings for November 8. This reflection also draws from John 6:1–14.*

In John 6, a great crowd gathers around Jesus, and the disciples wonder how to feed everyone. Then a child steps forward and offers what he has: five small loaves and two fish. In the hands of Jesus, that child's simple gift becomes enough to feed thousands.

It is a beautiful picture of faith — trusting God to use whatever we have, no matter how small. What might that young boy have grown up to tell his children and his children's children about that moment? About who God is and what God has done?

In Psalm 78, Asaph urges God's people to boldly declare God's faithfulness to the next generation: "We will tell the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord."

Together, these Scriptures remind us not only to share what we have, but to pass that spirit of faith and hope on.

That same spirit has shaped Thornwell's story for generations. Because communities of faith believe in Thornwell's mission and pass it on, children have been helping other children through one rather plump symbol for more than a century — the Thornwell cardboard turkey!

The tradition began early in Thornwell's history. In 1896, Presbyterian Sunday School children across South Carolina gave enough money to build the Children's Gift Academy, an elementary school for the growing number of children in Thornwell's care.

By the 1920s, cardboard turkey banks were helping a new generation continue that legacy. Children filled their turkeys one coin at a time; first with nickels, then dimes, and later quarters.

One extraordinary story about this tradition unfolded in 1960. Just before Thanksgiving, two college freshmen were asked to write about a childhood Thanksgiving memory.

One student, Bill Barron, remembered the cardboard turkey that sat on his family's breakfast table in Alabama every November. It had 30 slots, and each morning he placed a dime in one of them for children living 350 miles away at Thornwell.

Another student wrote about celebrating Thanksgiving as a child at Thornwell. The children were shown the filled cardboard turkeys and told, "People you may never see or meet filled these turkeys because they care about you."

Their professor recognized the connection and asked the students to read each other's essays. In that classroom, a child who had given and a child who had received discovered that they were part of the same story.

That is the beauty of generations of giving.

The tradition lives on through people like faithful Thornwell donor *Harley, who remembered the turkeys from his Sunday School days and carried a lifelong belief in Thornwell's ministry from this first interaction as a small boy. It continues through other faithful givers like James "Jimmy" Moore, who has filled paper turkeys for nearly 70 years and, with his wife, Miffy, even wears a turkey hat to encourage others to support Thornwell.

The coins have changed. The turkey has grown a little plumper. Thornwell's services have evolved to meet the current needs of children and families. But the heart of the tradition remains the same: **people inspiring the next generation to share what they have because God calls us to care about others.**

That is what Psalm 78 calls us to do: to remember what God has done and make sure the next generation knows.

Generosity is something we can pass down, regardless of our age, influence, or the size of our gift. God can use whatever we offer to bless others.

A compassionate parent raises children who notice the needs of others.

A generous church creates generations of people who bless others.

Like the child who offered his loaves and fish, we may not know what God will do with what we place in his hands. But we can trust God with it, and we can teach the next generation to do the same.

Today, it is our turn to continue that story. Through our prayers, generosity, and faithful support, we can show children and families that they are seen, valued, and loved, and we can teach the next generation what it means to care for others.

May we remember what God has done.

May we share what we have with childlike faith.

And may we tell the stories of what God does with our offering, passing generosity on from one generation to the next.

This Thornwell Emphasis Month, we invite you to be part of Generations of Giving by prayerfully considering how God is calling you to meet the needs of children and families. Through prayer, giving, or serving, your partnership with Thornwell this month—and all year long—helps "boldly declare God's faithfulness" for children, families, and communities.

CONTINUE TO WEEK 3 >>

In Matthew 25, Jesus tells a story about a man preparing to leave on a journey. Before he goes, he entrusts his property to three servants.

The first two servants take what they have been entrusted with and put it to work. And when their master returns, they've multiplied what they were given.

And the master says to each of them: **"Well done, good and trustworthy servant."**

The third servant, however, is afraid. Instead of investing what he was given, he buries it in the ground. The master doesn't praise him simply for returning what he was given. He challenges him because he allowed fear to keep him from using what had been entrusted to him.

At the heart of this parable is a powerful question: **What will we do with what God has entrusted to our care?**

Thornwell continues to ask this question year after year. But we don't have to answer it alone. Generous people and communities of faith have been asking this question alongside Thornwell throughout Thornwell's story for generations. They see a gap and find a way to fill it. They learn about a need, and they find a way to meet it.

Individuals. Families. Small groups. Churches. Partners. Communities.

People like William, who learned that kids at Thornwell were heading back to school soon and needed school supplies to set them up for success. He sent Thornwell a few packs of notebook paper, a pack of markers, and lip gloss with a handwritten letter. His gift may have seemed small. But it came from the heart. And it mattered.

It mattered to people like the women in the Charleston Modern Quilt Guild, who learned that kids often enter foster care without being able to take their favorite items from home. They believe every child deserves comfort and something that is just for them. So, they made beautiful handmade quilts for children and families at Thornwell. Each stitch carries a message: someone cares about you.

It mattered to people like the women of First Presbyterian Church in Fountain Inn, who learned that Teaching Parents were spending hours trying to make Christmas morning feel special for residential children. So, they turned Thornwell's Laundry into Santa's workshop and carefully wrapped each present, making it more than a gift. It became something personal, thoughtful, and wrapped with love.

It mattered to people like Jane and Charlie, faithful volunteers who learned that Thornwell's donation room needed some extra support to run efficiently. So, they show up month after month to keep the room stocked, organized, and ready to meet the needs of children and families.

It mattered to people like Jill Walls, who grew up at Thornwell and knows firsthand the impact that Thornwell can have on children. She has found ways to use her professional influence and partner with her organization to give generously and connect greater resources to the ministry that once invested in her.

Different people. Different gifts. Different capacities to give.

But the same heart: What I have can help someone else.

And this is what makes Thornwell's story so beautiful. It has never been written by one person. It has been written by people. By churches and communities. By children and families. By volunteers and donors. By staff and advocates. By people who pray, people who give, people who serve, and people who simply notice a need and ask, "what can I do?"

Together, these gifts become something larger than any one person could create alone.

What a beautiful picture of stewardship. God doesn't ask us to compare what we have with what someone else has. God asks us to be faithful with what has been placed in our hands.

And God often multiplies the impact.

Our time. Our resources. Our gifts. Our influence. Our opportunities.

What will we do with what we've been given?

May we be thoughtful with what has been entrusted to us.

May we be brave enough to put it to work.

And may we be generous enough to invest what we have in the lives of others.

Because when we faithfully use what God has placed in our hands, our impact can reach farther than we ever imagined.

"Well done, good and trustworthy servant."

This Thornwell Emphasis Month, we invite you to be part of Generations of Giving by prayerfully considering how God is calling you to meet the needs of children and families. Through praying, giving, or serving, your partnership with Thornwell this month, and all year long, multiplies the impact for the next generation: for children, for families, for communities.

CONTINUE TO WEEK 4 >>

**Matthew 25 is part of the Sunday lectionary reading for November 22*

In Matthew 25, Jesus tells his disciples that when we care for those who are hungry, thirsty, vulnerable, or in need, we are in fact caring for him.

“Just as you did it to one of the least of these... you did it to me.”

It is a beautiful picture of the upside-down kingdom of God. We discover that acts of compassion – feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, caring for the sick, and visiting the imprisoned – that may not make us popular or successful in the eyes of the world are at the very heart of righteousness that invites us to “inherit the kingdom.”

And sometimes, children understand this more simply than we do as adults.

When Hampton Hall was just ten years old, he told his parents that he wanted to give some of his money to children who needed it. To Hampton, the decision was simple. He knew his family had the things they needed. And he began thinking about children who didn't have the same things.

“I look at my family; we have things we need to keep us healthy,” Hampton said. “I look at my sister, and she's the best sister in the world.”

Hampton had been saving money in his own bank account, earning money for good grades and gold stars. He usually had other plans for that money, like buying Legos or Pokémon cards.

But when he thought about what other children might need, he decided to share what he had been saving. He wanted to give \$100, which is a lot of money for a ten-year-old.

His grandmother took him to the bank to withdraw the money. Then he placed the money in an envelope and took it to his church, asking that it be given to Thornwell.

“I'd like you to give this to Thornwell to help the kids,” he said.

Later, Hampton explained his heart even more simply: “I'm just doing things that help God.”

But Hampton didn't stop there.

The next year, he opened his heart again, tenfold. This time he generously donated \$1,000 he had earned so that children's needs at Thornwell could be met. His story, his stewardship, and his servant's heart inspired a wave of generosity from those who knew and loved his family, including his mother's colleagues at work. Together, they pulled together donations for Thornwell

in honor of Hampton's call to serve.

There is something beautiful in that childlike faith. Something we can all learn from.

Hampton wasn't trying to make a name for himself. He wasn't thinking about recognition. He simply saw that another child needed something he had, and he wanted to share it.

In sharing his allowance, Hampton had no idea he was stepping into a much older Thornwell story.

More than 150 years ago, another ten-year-old boy, Willie Anderson, heard Dr. William Plumer Jacobs share his vision for a home for children. Willie gave him the fifty-cent piece he had to help make that vision possible.

That small gift became part of the foundation of Thornwell's story.

And now, generations later, another child is carrying that spirit forward.

The gifts are different. The circumstances are different. But the heart is the same.

Hampton's story reminds us that generosity is not simply something we teach children to practice when they grow up. Generosity is something they can understand now, especially when caring adults model it for them. Sometimes we are the ones who need the lesson in gratitude and generosity, practicing what we preach.

Hampton's mother said it beautifully: “Children are helping other children because that's what they want to do... It really makes me proud knowing that he's the next generation already thinking about how he can help others.”

This is the legacy we hope to pass from one generation to another.

Because when we see others with compassion, give with joy, and serve with humility, we honor God. We help a new generation discover the riches of God's kingdom: a kingdom where love is shared, the vulnerable are cared for, and what we have been given becomes a gift to someone else.

May we be people who see.

May we be people who share.

And may we raise generations who do the same.

Thank you for helping build a legacy of generosity that reaches far beyond us.

CONTINUE TO WEEK 5 >>

**Deuteronomy 8:7–18 is the Thanksgiving Day lectionary for November 26*

In Deuteronomy 8, Moses reminds the Israelites of the years they spent in the wilderness. It was a difficult journey, but Moses wanted them to remember something important: **they did not walk through it alone.**



“Remember the long way that the Lord your God has led you.”

What a powerful reminder for us today. The God of all Creation cares so deeply for us that even when we find ourselves in the “wilderness” of life — when we experience sorrow, uncertainty, or pain — God does not abandon us.

Many children and families arrive at Thornwell in the deepest wilderness — experiencing grief, loss, disruption, or pain. They may not see the path ahead or a light at the end of the tunnel. The “good land” feels impossibly far away.

Years ago, for a young girl named Linda and her siblings, John and Barbara, Thornwell became part of their journey through that wilderness.

As children, they came to Thornwell during a difficult season of life. But here, they found more than a place to live. They found people who loved them, guided them spiritually, equipped them for life ahead, and helped them see possibilities for their future.

Thornwell invested in Linda. And Linda carried that investment with her.

She grew into a woman who invested deeply in her own family, teaching her children the lessons she learned along the way about faith, perseverance, generosity, and caring for others. Her son, Zack Devier, experienced that legacy firsthand.

Today, Zack has built a life filled with many accomplishments. More importantly, his life is filled with people he loves and deep gratitude for the people and places that helped shape him.

In Deuteronomy 8, Moses goes on to warn the Israelites not to forget where their blessings came from: “Do not say to yourself, ‘My power and the might of my own hand have gotten me this wealth.’”

Whatever we have, whatever we become, whatever good we can do, we did not get there entirely on our own.

Zack and his family embody that humility and gratitude. They remember the God who never abandoned them, those who bravely walked ahead of them, and those who have faithfully walked the journey alongside them. And that inspired a transformational gift to renovate historic Virginia Cottage on Thornwell’s campus.

Today, Virginia Cottage is part of Thornwell’s Foster Care Village, an intentional community designed to surround foster families and children with support, stability, and belonging. It creates space for families to welcome in large sibling groups at a time when there is a desperate need for more homes willing and able to keep siblings together.

For Zack, that purpose is especially meaningful.

“I can’t imagine losing your parents and then losing your siblings too,” he said. “To be able to prevent that — that’s huge.”

So, a gift that began with gratitude for what Thornwell did for his mother is now becoming an investment in children and families he may never meet.

That is the humility of generosity. That is the power of gratitude.

We recognize that we are recipients before we are givers.

We remember the people who invested in us.

We recognize the places where God met us along the way.

And then, with grateful hearts, we choose to invest in someone else.

Zack’s gift to Virginia Cottage is not simply about honoring his mother and her siblings. It is about continuing what they received here.

The gift moves forward. The love moves forward. The hope moves forward.

And perhaps one day, a child who finds belonging inside Virginia Cottage will grow up and become the person who creates belonging for someone else.

That is what generations of giving can look like. We may never know how far a gift will travel. But God does.

And when we faithfully invest in children and families today, the impact may continue through generations we will never live to see.

Thank you for helping carry that legacy forward.